

The Rush County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing, Wednesday, July 6, 2011 with Commissioners, Tom Barnes, Marvin Cole, Ken Masters, Deborah Adams, Auditor, and Leigh Morning, County Attorney in attendance.

Commissioner Tom Barnes called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Barnes addressed those in attendance, outlining the rules of those wishing to speak, and the purpose for the public hearing.

Barnes provided a brief history of the property that was the former junior high school located on Perkins Street between sixth and Seventh Street in the City of Rushville.

Barnes explained how the commissioners obtained ownership of the property that had been thru numerous county tax sales since the demolition of the building by the City of Rushville.

Barnes explained that there were attempts to place apartments on the property location. Barnes also shared that the county had access to Brownfield monies to remove the fuel tanks and was able to make the property marketable.

Barnes shared that the local Phoenix Lodge has approached the commissioners with the desire to purchase this property. Their current property located on Main Street will become vacant, but a party is also interested in this Main Street property.

Barnes shared paperwork submitted from the local Phoenix Lodge #62 outlining their proposed plan for their new lodge building, officers, providing brief principles and philosophy of the members of the Masonic Lodge.

Barnes also shared a letter received from Linda Levi, President of the Rush County Historical Society. The Historical Society welcomes the Masons' as neighbors on Perkins Street. The one concern of the Historical Society was that the new building is conducive to the neighborhood of many historical homes.

Barnes shared the petition letter signed by area residents. Barnes addressed each of the individual concerns outlined on the petition.

Barnes introduced Marvin Rees who in turn introduced officers, trustee, and special attendants of the Masons'.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT/QUESTIONS**

Oleta Brown – Shared concerns that the current Main street building is not being maintained properly. Brown asked what assurances would be on the new building.

Marvin Rees, Secretary of Phoenix Lodge #62 – Explained that the current building is so large, that they are doing the best that they can with what money they have.

Don Amos, Trustee of Phoenix Lodge #62 – Explained that the building required more than a few gallons of paint. Amos said he was told to stop due to defacing of a historical building.

Commissioner Barnes – shared that if the building is purchased by the interested party it may be dismantled.

Paul Morrell – Questioned how the Perkins street property would be transferred.

Commissioner Barnes - Explained that Marvin Rees on behalf of the Masons approached the commissioners with the desire to purchase the Perkins Street property. Barnes indicated that a dollar amount has not been established.

Paul Morrell – Questioned if other individuals have come forward.

Commissioner Barnes – Answered, no

Joyce Morrell – Questioned Don Amos as to who the individuals were that stopped them from doing anything further maintenance/painting on the outside of the building. Amos asked County Attorney Leigh Morning if he had to provide the names. Morning said specifically he, Don Amos did not have to provide the names of the individuals. Morrell explained as to why she asked the question

John Saxon – Questioned if any commissioner is a member of a Masonic lodge and if he felt this was a direct conflict

Commissioner Masters – Answered that he is a member of the Carthage #580 and he did not believe this presented a direct conflict with the Rushville #62 lodge.

Bruce Brown – Questioned if a value has been placed on the Perkins Street property and if the sale is contingent upon selling the Main Street building

Commissioner Tom Barnes – Answered No

Paul Morrell – Questioned the commissioners if they will ask a fair market value for the Perkins Street property.

Commissioner Barnes – Explained that two (2) appraisals would then be required if the property was placed on the open market the county could not accept less than 90% less than the appraised value. Barnes explained that nothing had been decided at this time.

Jim Finan, ECDC Director - Shared his concerns and questions to the commissioners if there have been other alternatives presented for the Masonic Lodge. Finan also asked if this decision is for the best economic value for this community.

Mayor Bostic - Informed the commissioners that the City of Rushville is interested in receiving the Perkins Street property back to the City. Bostic discussed the \$60,000.00 previously invested by the City in the property when tearing down the former junior high school. Bostic informed the commissioners that there was an agreement when his wife Sharon Bostic was Mayor and Marvin Cole was commissioner that the property would return to the City. Bostic asked for the opportunity to sell the lot for senior housing. County Attorney Leigh Morning questioned Mayor Bostic as to the date the proposed discussion between former Mayor Sharon Bostic and then commissioners were had. Mayor Bostic estimated 1997, but said it may not have been in a meeting.

Commissioner Barnes – challenged Jim Finan to find somebody to develop the Perkins street property.

Michelle Amos – Questioned Mayor Bostic as to why now years later in 2011 is the city now interested in the property. Amos went on to share her concerns of the timing since the property has been vacant and undeveloped for several years and Bostic is now in the third year of his term.

Mayor Bostic – Answered that the city deserves a shot.

David Payne - Shared that as an area resident of the Perkins street location, he no longer had any concerns of the Masonic lodge. His concerns now are with the senior housing. Payne asked if this was going to be low income government subsidized housing.

Mayor Bostic – Answered that it would be much like that on 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

Will Cameron – Shared that the Historical Society had given past thought of purchasing the property. Cameron questioned that the property was not advertised.

Robin Warner, Worthy Patron of the Eastern Star - Shared his concerns that the current mayor is now stepping forward after the property has set for years under more than one (1) mayor.

George Engles, Deputy Grand Master of the State Masonic Lodge – Shared his support of the Phoenix Lodge.

Commissioner Masters – Shared that it was good to hear everyone's thoughts on the subject.

Commissioner Cole – Shared that a lot of information was gathered and will be taken into consideration.

Jim Finan – Shared his concerns as to what would be done to the current building on Main Street. Finan expressed that we don't want to leap frog from one empty lot to another empty building. Finan shared that he would like some strong assurances from the individuals interested in the current building.

Commissioner Barnes – could not share the names with Finan, only his understanding that the individuals were interested in the current building. Barnes did ask Finan if he had any interested parties in the Perkins Street property at this time.

Jim Finan – Stated No, he did not have any interested persons in the Perkins Street property at this time. Finan did express that he is here at the public hearing with only the best interest of economic development for the community of Rush County.

Marvin Rees – Shared that there is no money available for maintenance of the current building. The Masonic lodge has looked for grants with no luck.

Commissioner Barnes - explained that he will let everyone know that the property is available. Barnes informed Jim Finan that he has got his hands full. Barnes also informed Mayor Bostic to get his attorney together with our attorney.

Discussion was held on the Sunesis Engineering contract. Sunesis requires a thirty (30) day notice to vacate the Perkins Street property. Sunesis is contracted for the Main Street project.

Robin Warner – Encouraged everyone to not stall the process.

Motion to adjourn at 7:47 p.m. was received from Ken Masters. Marvin Cole seconded the motion. Motion carried.

/s/Tom Barnes  
Tom Barnes, Chairman

/s/Marvin Cole  
Marvin Cole

/s/Ken Masters  
Ken Masters

ATTEST:

/s/Deborah C. Adams  
Deborah C. Adams, Auditor